

# DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 048 962

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RC 005 174

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 TITLE: Attitudes, Understanding, and Interaction: Students, Parents, Teachers, and Community Leaders; Perceptions of Indian Education. The National Study of American Indian Education, Series IV, No. 12, Final Report.  
 INSTITUTION: Chicago Univ., Ill.  
 SPONS AGENCY: National Center for Educational Research and Development (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.  
 BUREAU NO: IE-9-0147  
 PUB DATE: Dec 79  
 CONTRACT: OEC-9-9-00147-2805  
 NOTE: 29p.  
 EDRS PRICE: EDRS Price MF40.65 HC13.25  
 DESCRIPTORS: \*American Indians, \*Educational Attitudes, Interaction, Interviews, Parent Attitudes, Parent-Teacher Relations, \*School Community Relationship, School Involvement, \*Student Attitudes, \*Teacher Attitudes

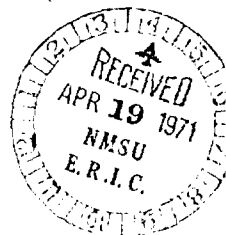
## ABSTRACT

As part of the National Study of American Indian Education, this report on perceptions of Indian education is divided into 2 sections. The first deals with attitudes of Indian students and parents toward formal education and with attitudes of teachers toward Indians. The second section is concerned with interaction between the Indian community, the school community, and the degree to which people in these 2 groups know and understand each other. Data obtained from student, parent, teacher, and community leader interviews and teacher questionnaires were analyzed using rating scales. Only 1 of 4 Indian students appeared to be very interested in school; others evinced mild interest to general disinterest. Parents appeared to be more concerned about education of their children. Teachers varied widely in their attitudes toward Indians, but many teachers seemed to feel that Indian students were not well motivated to succeed in academic work. Less than 5% of the teachers felt negatively about teaching Indian children. Interaction between the Indian community and the school was not great. The general opinion of most community leaders was that the Indian community had little meaningful voice in the school. Most community leaders favored increase in local community control of schools. Parents and teachers were poorly informed about each other and each other's institutions, making it more difficult for schools to serve the Indian community and for Indians to influence the school. (JH)

ED048962

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## NATIONAL STUDY OF AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION



USOE  
PROJECT CEC-0-8-080147-2805

FINAL REPORT

### Perceptions of Indian Education

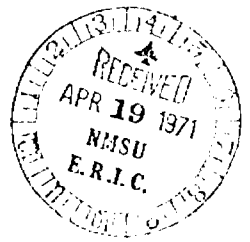
Series IV

Attitudes, Understanding, and Interaction: Students,  
Parents, Teachers, and Community Leaders

No. 12

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December, 1970



## NATIONAL STUDY OF AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION

The attached paper is one of a number which make up the Final Report of the National Study of American Indian Education.

This Study was conducted in 1968-69-70 with the aid of a grant from the United States Office of Education, OEC-O-8-080147-2805.

The Final Report consists of five Series of Papers:

- I. Community Backgrounds of Education in the Communities Which Have Been Studied.
- II. The Education of Indians in Urban Centers.
- III. Assorted Papers on Indian Education--mainly technical papers of a research nature.
- IV. The Education of American Indians--Substantive Papers.
- V. A Survey of the Education of American Indians.

The Final Report Series will be available from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service after they have been announced in Research in Education. They will become available commencing in August, 1970, and the Series will be completed by the end of 1970.

ATTITUDES, UNDERSTANDING, AND INTERACTION: STUDENTS,  
PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

This report is divided into two sections.\* The first deals with the attitudes of Indian students and parents toward formal education and the attitudes of teachers toward Indians. The second section is concerned with the interaction between the Indian community and the school community and the degree to which people in these two "worlds" know about and understand each other.

Our data come from several sources: the student, parent, teacher and community leader interviews, and the teacher questionnaire. The student, parent, and community leader rating scales used are all 6-point scales, but the student scale and two of the three parent scales (I.A and II.C) have been collapsed to 4 points as follows:

<u>Points</u>	<u>Value</u>
1 and 2	2
3	3
4	4
5 and 6	5

The teacher rating scales are all 5-point scales. Points 1 and 2 have been collapsed into one point (with a value of "2") on scale F; the other two scales have not been collapsed. The scoring of the items from the teacher questionnaire will be explained as we report on each one.

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\*This report is one of a series on the results of the rating scale analysis done using Student, Parent, Teacher and Community Leader Interviews recorded by personnel on the National Study of American Indian Education. The reader will understand what is discussed in this paper better if he is familiar with the other papers in Series IV of the Final Report of the National Study of American Indian Education, particularly numbers 1, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. Paper No. 1 lists the schools studied and some of their characteristics and the nature of the field research. Paper No. 7 includes examples from the interview schedules and rating scales utilized in the Study and describes how they were formulated and used. Papers No. 8 and No. 9 deal with the validity and reliability of the rating scales and interviews. Numbers 10, 11, and 12 are based on the results of the rating scale questionnaire analysis. Number 10 deals with the attitudes of Indians toward their culture. Number 11 reports on the evaluations Indians make of their schools.

## ATTITUDES

In this section we shall discuss the attitudes of students and parents toward formal education and the attitudes of teachers toward Indians.

### Students

Scale L: Student's Interest in the Academic Aspect of School.

Most students evince a mild interest in school. The mean score for the total sample is 3.98, and the modal rating was 4. Nearly 50 percent of our sample was rated at this point. It is defined as follows:

4. Respondent is mildly interested in school. He sometimes volunteers in class, and he may express interest in some subjects.

Clearly, this defines a minimal level of interest. Any student who replied that he liked some subjects was generally rated at this point.

Approximately one fourth of our sample (24%) was rated at points 5 or 6. Such students indicated that they were quite interested in most of the subjects, either for their intrinsic value or for "getting a good education" (and, perhaps, a "good job"). Another fifth of our sample (20%) were definitely disinterested in school. They were rated at point 3. An example of a student rated at this point is the following:

I: What is the highest grade you would like to finish?

R: Well, I was thinking about just going through 8th grade and then quit, but I want to go all the way through high school now.

I: Do you take part in class on your own?

R: I just sit and wait usually. I don't know many answers anyways. There isn't really much volunteering anyway. Mostly you just sit around while the teacher talks.

Finally, 7 percent of our sample were rated at points 1 or 2, indicating that they thoroughly hated school.

A number of questions were designed to elicit information pertinent to this question of interest. They included: "What do you get out of school?" "What is the highest grade you would like to finish?" "Do you take part in class on your own, or do you wait for your teacher to call on you?" "What do you like best about this school?" "What do you dislike most?" "What subjects?" The answers were not surprising. One student from Browning said that, if he

did not go to school, he "would be like one of those people around here, without any education and without a job." This response was very common. Students often said that they "would not learn anything" if they did not go to school; some said that they "would be stupid." Clearly, most saw school as the place where one "learns things," things which are somehow necessary for getting a job.

An example of a more motivated student is the following:

(Q)\* If I didn't go to school, I wouldn't know as many things that I know about. I'd probably learn instead how to trap, fish, and hunt. (Q). I learn how to speak and write in school. I learn math and science, and how to get along in life better--to understand things better. (Q). I'd like to go to college. I like art. (Q). I take part in class on my own. (Q). I come back to school after it gets out if I leave a book, or if I want to work on something. (Q). The best things about it are it's not crowded. And I like art and science--I get my highest grades in science. (Q). I don't like spelling - it's hard for me.

Another fairly motivated student from Oklahoma mentioned that in school, "you get out of the backwardness of the Indian and of course, you get an education."

That some Indian students see "an education" as something slightly foreign is not surprising. Their attitudes toward it are often colored by the fact that many of their parents' generation did not go very far in school. One very articulate Sioux 12th grader who attended an integrated school spoke to the interviewer concerning his feelings about school as follows:

I: What would happen if you didn't go to school?

R: Well, I'd probably be a bum.

I: Would you like that better than having to go to school?

R: Well, I don't know. Right now I think I would, but if I didn't have an education and get, you know, what I wanted to do, I don't think it would have been worthwhile.

I: What do you get out of going to school?

R: I don't know. I can't pinpoint nothing.

I: Do you have any plans for anything after you graduate?

R: Well, let's try college, but right now I'm scared. I'd like to go to a technical school if I don't make it in college. And I'd like to travel, see different people, and maybe see what I want to do.

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\* (Q) indicates that the interviewer asked a question at this point. What follows is the response to this question.

I: Why are you scared?

R: Because I don't think I have--uh--any brains, nothing. . . . Because these other kids have had everything handed to them, you know, like, "Now Jim, come in and finish your homework, and be sure you get A's in school, and make sure you learn this and that," and, well, when I go home, I come home with books, you know, and she never says a word. Everything's left up to me, to get all my work done, you know.

This student felt that he got little support or help from home as far as his schoolwork was concerned. Clearly we need to get some idea of how Indian parents feel about their children getting a formal education.

### Parents

#### Scale II-C: Parent's Attitude toward Formal Education.

It is clear from the results on this scale that the vast majority of Indian parents subscribe at least verbally to the American belief in the importance of a formal education. The mean score for the total parent sample on this scale ( $N = 681$ ) was 4.32. Only one percent of our sample saw such little value in education that they clearly did not care whether or not their children attended school. Another 13 percent did not appear deeply concerned about their children's education. But 86 percent at least said that they hoped their children would finish high school. Most stated simply that "you need a good education," and many added "so you can get a job." Of these 86 percent, over half (46% of the total sample) mentioned that they would like to see their children get some further education or training in either a vocational-technical school or in college.

The possibility that some of these parents were giving us the answers they thought we would want to hear is real, of course. But the percentage of parents expressing concern for their children's education is so high that we feel safe in saying that the great majority of Indian parents do desire "an education" for their children.

On the other hand, it is likely that many Indian parents who say they want their children to finish high school and go on to college or technical school do not apply much pressure to their children. Again and again our respondents, when asked, "What do you want your child to be when he gets older?" replied, "It's up to him," or, "It would be nice for him to become a \_\_\_\_\_, but he must decide." This seems to be the prevailing philosophy among our Indian parents--a feeling that one's children can and should make up their own minds. As one Quinault man said, "It's mostly up to the child--what he wants to make of himself. Nobody should be pushed into something he doesn't want."

The fact that few Indian parents have had as extensive a formal education as they want for their children also means that they will not be able to offer much actual help to their children as they continue in school. Even more important, they are not likely to have high expectations regarding their children's education, regardless of what they hope for. These facts must be kept in mind as we evaluate the apparently high verbalized interest in and commitment to the formal educational process which our sample of Indian parents demonstrated.

### Inter-school Comparisons of Student and Parent Results

Breaking down the results on Student Scale L and Parent Scale II-C by schools does not tell us much. For one thing, the comparability of ratings done in different centers is dubious on these two scales. For another, we received no information from our observers in the field on the interest in school of students and parents in their communities. According to our scale results, it does appear that Lumbee students and parents in the Pembroke school system are the most interested in getting a formal education, perhaps in part because the schools are entirely administered and taught by Lumbees. Many Lumbees go on to college (often the local one in Pembroke) and stay in or return to their community as professionals, businessmen, etc. Thus, "getting an education" is not so foreign to this group of Indians; on the contrary, it is an oft-used road for middle class and upwardly mobile lower class Lumbees.

### Teachers

We shall begin our look at the teachers' attitudes toward Indians by examining some of their responses to specific items on the Teacher Questionnaire. The Teacher Questionnaire was a self-administered set of questions answerable by either "True-False-Neither" or "Strongly Agree-Agree-Undecided-Disagree-Strongly Disagree." We shall first consider five items from this questionnaire which get at the teachers' opinions of Indian students and parents.

Item 24: Indian kids are eager students with a great desire to learn.

Twenty-four percent of our sample of Teachers (N = 600) agreed with this statement ("True") and 44 percent disagreed ("False"). Thirty-two percent checked "Neither"; we interpret this response as an indication that the respondent did not feel it was possible to generalize about all Indian students. The mean score on this item was 2.19. (A score of "1.00" would mean that all teachers agreed that Indian students are eager to learn; a score of "3.00" that all teachers agreed that Indian students are not eager to learn.)

Item 25: In class, Indian children are shy and lack confidence.

Twenty-five percent of our sample disagreed with this statement ("False"); 50 percent agreed with this statement ("True"); 25 percent declined to generalize



about all Indian students in this way ("Neither"). The mean score on this item was 2.25. (A score of 1.00 would mean that all teachers disagreed with the statement, believing instead that Indian students were not shy in class, a score of 3.00 would mean that all teachers agreed that Indian children were shy in class.)

Item 26: Indian children are well-behaved and obey the rules.

Forty-one percent of our sample agreed with this statement ("True"); 24 percent disagreed with this statement ("False"); 35 percent would not generalize about all Indian students ("Neither"). The mean score on this item was 1.84. (A score of 1.00 would mean that all teachers agreed that Indian children are well behaved, a score of 3.00 that all teachers disagreed, feeling instead that Indian children were not well behaved.)

In sum, the typical teacher feels that Indian children are well behaved but that most are shy in class and not eager to learn. Many teachers refuse to stereotype all Indian students, especially as far as their eagerness to learn and their being well-behaved is concerned. In the case of the first two statements, only one-fourth of the teachers indicate having a positive opinion of Indian students--that they are eager to learn and confident in class. Relatively few teachers, then, feel that Indian children in general are good students.

We now turn to the teacher's attitudes toward Indian parents.

Item 28: Indian parents want to help their children in school.

Fifty-three percent of our teacher sample agreed with this statement ("True"); 18 percent disagreed with this statement ("False"); 29 percent refused to generalize about all Indian parents ("Neither"). The mean score on this item was 1.65. (A score of 1.00 would mean that all teachers agreed that Indian parents want to help their children in school; a score of 3.00 that they all disagreed with this statement).

Item 34: The school's teaching conflicts with the Indian parent's teaching.

Forty-one percent of our teacher sample agreed with this statement ("Agree" or "Strongly Agree"); 39 percent disagreed with this statement ("Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree"); 20 percent indicated that they were "Undecided." The mean score on this item was 2.95. (A score of 1.00 would mean that all teachers strongly agreed that the schools' teaching conflicted with the Indian parents' teaching; a score of 5.00 that all strongly disagreed with this).

Clearly, the majority of teachers believe that Indian parents are concerned about the education of their children and would like to help them then possible. There is no consensus among our sample of teachers, however, as to whether or not the things which Indian children actually learn at home conflict with the school's teaching. Many teachers feel that what the child learns at home is not consistent with what they want to teach him in school, but an equal number of teachers disagree with this.

Four of the items cited above (items 24, 25, 26, and 28) were part of a set of 10 statements or generalizations about Indian students, parents and culture which was designed to indicate to what extent teachers viewed Indians in terms of stereotypes and, if so, whether these stereotypes were positive or negative. Teachers marked "True," "False," or "Neither" after each of these statements. Each statement was either a positive or negative generalization about Indians.\*

We obtained 3 scores for each teacher based on this set of 10 statements:

1. A score for "positive attitudes"--the sum of the positive generalizations which the teacher marked "True" plus the negative generalizations which the teacher marked "False."
2. A score for "negative attitudes"--the sum of the negative generalizations which the teacher marked "True" plus the positive generalizations which the teacher marked "False."
3. A score for "uncertainty"--the sum of the generalizations of either kind which the teacher marked "Neither" (or, on some protocols, "Undecided"). This suggested the degree to which teachers were unwilling to make generalizations concerning all Indians--in other words, to subscribe to stereotypes.

The mean scores and percentages for the total sample of teachers (N = 620) are summarized in the following table.

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\*Examples of these statements, in addition to the four discussed individually above, are:

- Item 19: Indian parents treat their children with love and respect equal to that given white children by their parents.
- Item 22: Indian pupils would rather spend their time having a good time than working hard to get ahead.
- Item 23: Indian people are incompetent concerning practical things.

Table 1. Attitudes of Teachers Toward Indians

	Percentage of Teachers* Who					Mean Number of Statements Responded to in This Way
	Responded to 0 Statements in This Way	Responded to 1 to 3 State- ments in This Way	Responded to 4 to 6 State- ments in This Way	Responded to 7 to 10 Statements in This Way		
Positive Attitudes	6	30	38	26		4.66
Negative Attitudes	25	43	26	6		2.47
Uncertain	20	51	22	6		2.56

\*N = 620

Teachers agreed most highly in rejecting the notion that the native culture impeded the Indian child's learning. The majority also agreed that Indian parents were concerned that their children receive an education. A large number of teachers (approximately 45%), however, were convinced that Indian students were not eager to learn and lacked confidence in class.

To shed more light on this question of teacher attitudes toward Indians, we shall examine results from two rating scales used to analyze the teacher interviews.

**Scale B: Teacher's Degree of Understanding of and Sympathy for the Problems of the Local Indian People.**

The mean for this scale was 3.09 (on a possible range from 1.00 to 5.00). Roughly equal numbers of teachers were rated at points 2, 3, and 4. Thirty percent of our teacher sample ( $N = 440$ ) were rated at point 2, indicating that they were "sympathetic" toward Indian people as being "disadvantaged" but that they had a poor conception of the problems Indians actually face. Twenty-nine percent were rated at point 3. Such teachers expressed some understanding and sympathy for certain aspects of the situation in which their Indian pupils were living without really understanding the total situation of the Indian people in the community. Twenty-five percent of the teachers were rated at point 4, suggesting that they have a good understanding of and considerable sympathy for the problems of the local Indian people.

In addition, 6 percent of our teacher sample evinced no understanding of the Indian people in their communities. At the other end of the scale, 10 percent of the teachers seemed to have a very good understanding of the Indian community and a real sensitivity to and respect for it.

Thus, approximately one third of our teacher sample had a good basis for forming their attitudes toward Indians. Two thirds did not appear to know and understand their Indian "clients" as well as they could have.

Given these general attitudes, we now want to ask how these teachers felt about teaching Indian children?

**Scale F: Teacher's Attitude toward Teaching Indian Children.**

The mean for this scale was 3.78. Nearly half of our teachers (46%) were rated at point 4, indicating that they liked teaching Indian children. These teachers were not necessarily "crazy about" Indian children, but they certainly had no serious complaints about their teaching situation. Another 35 percent of our sample were rated at point 3, suggesting that they saw teaching Indian children as no different from teaching non-Indian children. They expressed no positive or negative feelings about this. On the other hand, 16 percent of the teachers rated on this scale found the experience of teaching Indians to be unique and clearly preferred it to other teaching situations. Finally, 4 percent of our sample expressed negative feelings about teaching Indian children. Thus, with few exceptions, teachers of Indians in the schools we studied appear to feel neutral to positive about teaching Indians as opposed to teaching non-Indians.

### Inter-school Comparisons of Teacher Results

Teachers in nine schools stand out at the upper and lower extremes as far as attitudes toward Indians are concerned. Teachers in four schools clearly have the most consistently positive opinions of Indians, while teachers in five others have the most consistently negative opinions. The first four schools are: Magnolia and Pembroke (North Carolina), Taholah (Washington), and Chemawa (a BIA boarding school in Salem, Oregon). The other five schools (negative attitudes) are: Neah Bay (Washington), and the four schools we studied in Menominee and Shawano Counties in Wisconsin. The mean numbers of "positive attitudes" and "negative attitudes" for teachers in these schools, as well as those for our total sample of teachers, are given in the table below.

Table 2. Schools with Extreme Ratings of Teachers on Attitudes toward Indians

<u>School</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean Number of Positive Attitudes</u>	<u>Mean Number of Negative Attitudes</u>
Magnolia and Pembroke	30	7.10	0.79
Taholah	7	6.43	0.14
Chemawa	34	6.84	1.29
Neah Bay	15	3.67	4.27
Menominee County	52	3.46	3.62
Total Sample	620	4.66	2.47

On the two key statements regarding student and parent interest in school, teachers in these schools stood out again at the extremes. Of all the schools for which we had teacher questionnaire data,\* teachers at Chemawa, Magnolia, Pembroke, and Taholah felt most strongly that Indian children were "eager students with a great desire to learn." They also had the most positive ratings on the item, "Indian parents want to help their children in school." The least positive opinions of Indian students' "eagerness to learn" were expressed by teachers at Neah Bay and at the four Menominee County schools.

\*This does not include Angeou, Cut Bank, Hoopa, Phoenix BIA, St. Francis, or Theodore Roosevelt.

Teachers in the Pawnee, Ponca City, and in the Red Wing-Burnside school systems were also relatively negative in their evaluation of students on this item. All of these teachers--Neah Bay, Menominee County, Red Wing-Burnside, Pawnee, and Ponca City--were also the most negative in their opinion of the parents' concern for helping their children in school. Teachers in Chicago were also relatively negative in their opinion of the parents' concern.

We have no information which would help us to understand why teachers in these schools have the most positive and negative opinions, respectively. We would like to point out that many of the schools in which teachers appear to have relatively negative opinions of Indian students and parents are also the ones which are most criticized by these same students and parents. This is demonstrated in the following table.

Table 3. A Comparison of the Schools Most Criticized by Indians with the Schools Where Teachers Have the Most Negative Attitudes toward Indians

<u>Nine Schools Most Criticized by</u>		<u>Schools in Which Teachers Had Relatively Negative Attitudes Toward</u>	
<u>Students</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Parents</u>
Chicago	Chicago		Chicago
Hoopla	Hoopla	no data available	
	Keshena	Keshena	Keshena
Moclips	Moclips		
	Neah Bay	Neah Bay	Neah Bay
Pawnee	Pawnee	Pawnee	Pawnee
School C*	School C		
Ponca City	Ponca City	Ponca City	Ponca City
		Red Wing-Burnside	Red Wing-Burnside
St. Francis		no data available	
St. Joseph	St. Joseph	St. Joseph	St. Joseph
Shawano		Shawano	Shawano

\*School C is a junior high school in Minneapolis which was highly criticized by Indian students and parents. Interestingly enough, teachers at School C share a rather high opinion of the Indian parents' desire to help their children in school. Their opinion of Indian students' eagerness to learn, while not unusually high, is not unusually low either.

The results on one other item are rather interesting, though not surprising. This is the statement, "In class, Indian kids are shy and lack confidence." The teachers who agreed most strongly with this were, for the most part, teachers of relatively unacculturated Indian children--at Indian Oasis, Pima Central, Fort Thomas, Cibecue BIA, Flagstaff, Laguna-Acoma, Tuba City, Shonto, and Chemawa. Teachers at Moclips and School C also stood out in their high agreement with this statement.

Finally, a look at the "Uncertain" score seems warranted. Teachers in the two major urban areas (Chicago and Minneapolis-St. Paul) and teachers at Cheyenne-Eagle Butte, Red Wing-Burnside, and Taholah most frequently marked "Neither" in response to the stereotypical statements, indicating that they were least prone to generalizing about all Indians. This seems important to us. On the other hand, the teachers who were most prone to stereotyping were those at Magnolia, Pembroke, Chemawa, Indian Oasis, and Pima Central. Teachers in all of these schools held relatively high numbers of positive attitudes, not negative ones.

It was our intention that the Teacher Questionnaire and the rating scale analysis complement each other. The question we turn to now is: To what extent do the results of the rating scale analysis confirm the results of the Teacher Questionnaire, and vice versa. On Scale B ("Understanding of and Sympathy for Local Indian People"), teachers at the Chemawa, Magnolia, Pembroke and Taholah schools were among those with the highest ratings--as on the Teacher Questionnaire. Teachers at Angoon, Bethel, St. Francis, and Neah Bay were rated just as high, however. The results for the Neah Bay teachers are most surprising, given the evidence from the Teacher Questionnaire that they hold rather negative views of the Indian community. And yet the rating scale results were supported by the observations of two of our field workers. In response to a specific question about this, they wrote to say that Neah Bay teachers were indeed quite understanding of and sympathetic toward the Indian community, though they were clearly quite estranged from it. We conclude that Neah Bay teachers have a good deal of understanding of and sympathy for the local Indian community, but that their opinions of students' and parents' motivations for education are quite negative.

As for the high ratings of teachers at Angoon and St. Francis, we had no data from the Teacher Questionnaire on them, so we cannot compare results on the two instruments. Bethel teachers, on the other hand, were included in the report on Teacher Questionnaire data, and they did not stand out as particularly positive or negative on any of the items we considered.

The schools whose teachers averaged lowest on this rating scale included the two Menominee County schools for which we had interview data--Neopit and Shawano. The other school at which teachers were rated as having little understanding of or sympathy for local Indians was Hoopa. Teacher turnover at Hoopa was quite high, we know, and most teachers interacted minimally with the Indian community. However, this was true of other schools as well. We cannot explain why Hoopa teachers were less understanding than these others.

The mean scores on Scale F ("Attitude toward Teaching Indians") for teachers in the various schools do not "fit" exactly with the results of the Teacher Questionnaire either. Chemawa, Magnolia, and Taholah teachers were among those who most enjoyed teaching Indians, but teachers at Pembroke were relatively low. Teachers in Chicago, Cut Bank and Pawnee--schools at which teachers scored at least average on the "Attitudes" section of the Teacher Questionnaire--also had low ratings on this. We believe that this is because teachers in these schools tended to see little difference between Indian and non-Indian children, and thus were rated at point 3. This lowered the mean scores relative to other teachers who said that they liked teaching Indian students and who did not stress that they saw these children as no different from others.

Other teachers who were rated as feeling very positively toward teaching Indian children were those in Fort Thomas, Neah Bay, Shonto, and Tuba City.

#### INTERACTIONS

In this section, we shall examine the results of two parent and one teacher rating scales. These should tell us how familiar parents are with their school, how well teachers know the Indian community, and the extent to which parents are involved with the school. We shall touch on the subject of control of the schools, but, since our interviews and rating scales were not adequate in getting information on this subject, what we say lacks the force of most of our other observations.

#### Parents

Scale I-A: Parents' Knowledge of the School's Program and Policy.

Seventy-five percent of the ratings (N = 696) were spread fairly evenly over points 2, 3, and 4 on this rating scale; the mean was 3.28. This suggests that the knowledge most parents have of the school is poor to fair. Thirty-one percent were rated at point 3; this is defined as follows:

3. The parent knows some things about the school, but he is still uninformed or misinformed about many of its aspects. For instance, though he may know several facts (e.g. the names of his child's teachers and the principal, whether or not a Board of Education controls the school), he does not have a good understanding of what the school is, what the curricular and extra-curricular program is, or how such programs and general policies are decided upon.

An example from an actual interview was given in the rating manual for this point on the scale.\* In the example, the parent said that her 5th grade child

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\*This was done for almost all points on all scales. See Paper No. 7 in this series.



was learning "how to do math and read books," that her teacher's name was "Mrs. Wheeler," and that the principal's name was "Mr. Jones." She felt that the teacher "worked well with children." She did not know if the teacher or school taught anything about tribal history and culture; she had not met the teacher or visited her child's classroom; she did not know if a board of education existed; and she did not know if any adult education courses were offered by the school. Clearly, a rating of "3" marks a rather low level of knowledge and understanding. In addition to the 31 percent rated at this point, another 31 percent were rated at points 1 and 2, indicating that they knew almost nothing about the school.

Twenty-one percent of the respondents rated on this scale were rated at point 4. These parents knew such things as what was taught at school and who their children's teachers and principals were. Some were familiar with the school routine. But none appeared to understand such things as the processes of decision-making and administration, the ways in which a curriculum was set up, or the different styles in which different teachers taught.

The final 18 percent of our sample seemed well-informed about the school and were rated at points 5 or 6. One parent rated at point 5 said the following in response to the interviewer's questions:

(Q). The school does not offer enough vocational type training. They also need counseling and more guidance. They need to emphasize things where they can use their hands more. (Q). I'm pleased because they learn home economics skills--the hygiene of family life, how to manage money, how to shop, how to keep your house presentable. (Q). No, I don't know their (her children's) teachers. (Q). Yes, a Board of Education controls the school. It is pretty strong. (Q). They set the budget and hire teachers. They ask for a levy if that's necessary. They hire the principal and the superintendent. The superintendent makes sure that the school meets state standards. (Q). He (the principal) just came this year--I can't remember his name.

We would guess that the great majority of Americans who are considered part of the middle and upper classes would fall at points 5 or 6 on this rating scale. Working or lower-class parents, on the other hand, would not be rated so differently from Indian parents.

#### Scale IV-A: Parents' Involvement in School Affairs.

Most of our sample of parents (N = 688) were not actively involved with the school. Many had little contact at all. Twenty-eight percent indicated that they had never met their child's teacher or visited the school for any purpose (point 1 on the scale). Another 17 percent had had such contact only when requested by a teacher or principal, usually to discuss some problem or question that had arisen concerning their children (point 2).

Thirty-seven percent of the parents indicated that they had gone to the school on their own initiative for some reason (point 3). These reasons

included "Open House" or "Parents' Night," talking with the teacher when going to pick up a child at school, and attending athletic, social, or other events at the school. The majority of the occasions cited were in this latter category--going to football or basketball games, to high school band concerts, or to the Christmas program. The mean rating score on this scale was 2.54.

Only the remaining 18 percent of our parent sample were actively involved in school affairs by occasionally or regularly attending PTA meetings, tribal or community meetings to discuss education and the school, board of education meetings, etc. Only 18 percent of this set (4 percent of the total sample) was involved on a regular basis in some organization which was concerned with education. Most others simply stated that they had gone to a PTA meeting once or twice during the past couple of years.

This lack of contact with and involvement in the school is not surprising, given the socio-economic and cultural conditions of most Indian families. The teachers, of course, come from a very different background and live quite differently from the families of most of their students. The other side of the coin, then, is: how familiar are teachers with the Indian community.

#### Teachers

##### Scale A: Teacher's Experience and Knowledge of the Local Indian Community.

Teachers do not appear to know much more about the communities in which they teach than parents know about the schools. Fifteen percent were rated at point 1 on this scale, indicating that they knew nothing about the Indians in this community. The only contact these teachers had with Indians was in the school.

Another 38 percent of the teachers had had very limited experience with the local Indian community--through shopping in town, visiting a couple of families, perhaps going to an annual pow-wow or dinner, and seeing students outside of the classroom in extracurricular activities. Thus, over half of the teachers in our sample had little or no experience with the Indians whose children they teach; consequently, most knew little about the local Indian community.

The other half of our sample of teachers had more extensive contact with and knowledge of local Indians. Twenty-one percent were rated at point 3, 24 percent at point 4, and 2 percent at point 5. An example of a response which was rated at point 3 is:

(Q). I've taught here for less than 2 years. (Q). I've seen some of my students at church and at tribal dinners. (Q). I've met some parents at conferences or PTA meetings. But I meet more at the store and the post office. I came to feel a part of the community by walking to the store and greeting people on the way. (Q). No, I haven't visited many of the homes of my students. (Q). I was surprised that the students still like seal oil. I didn't think they knew what it was. Also, they're

interested in the canoe races. (Q). Well, one of the problems of these people is that they don't have much opportunity to mix with other people. A trip to . . . (a city some 100 miles away) is like a journey to the unknown. And they still have a lot of feelings about the status of certain families. (Q). I attended the Northwest Indian Culture Workshops here.

Teachers rated at points 4 and 5 had had more extensive contact with the local community. The mean rating for the total sample, however, was 2.62, and very few teachers seemed to be actively involved in such things as churches, civic or tribal organizations, or the informal network of friendship and kinship activities. It appears that most interacted with others of their own class and ethnic group, such people often being other teachers.

This pattern of interaction was certainly encouraged by the fact that a majority of these teachers lived in compounds separated from the Indian community. Of 629 teachers reporting, 55 percent said that most teachers at their school lived in a separate compound. Of the remaining 45 percent who did not live in such compounds, approximately one-third taught in Chicago, Minneapolis, St. Paul, or Robeson County, North Carolina--all rather special cases. This tendency for teachers to be housed separately has long been characteristic of many Bureau schools, but our study demonstrates that it is common in public school systems as well.

The lack of communication and interaction between local Indians and teachers is all too understandable. They generally have very little in common with each other. They have been raised in different physical, social, and cultural environments and do not share the same interests, values and goals. They have had very different educational experiences: teachers were fairly good students who completed college; Indian parents were often poor or average students who did not go very far in school. In some areas, travel is difficult, especially for those who do not know the unmapped roads and drive cars instead of trucks. The high rate of teacher turnover and the absence of good orientation programs compounds the problem in many schools. As a result of these many factors, teachers are not likely to become part of the local community or even get to know individual Indian people very well, and Indian parents are understandably reticent about approaching professional educators in the new glass and steel school buildings or in the teachers' relatively modern homes. This situation has been described by many social scientists; the Waxess' term, "mutual avoidance" sums it up very well.

Almost as many as those who have described this situation are those who have deplored it and called for some changes which would bring the Indian and the educational communities in closer communication with each other. Many of the suggestions call for increasing the Indian communities' involvement in and control of the schools. We had hoped to get some good data on this question, but, most unfortunately, the questions on our interview schedule proved inadequate to get at parent and teacher attitudes toward this issue. Our impression from reading some of the better interviews and from conversations

with field directors and field workers is that the majority of Indian parents were not very concerned about this. Understandably, many of them had more immediate problems to deal with. However, it is our impression that the momentum is growing for increased involvement and control. In many communities, groups of Indians are becoming concerned that the school should be "theirs" and that they should decide who teaches there and what they teach. In the "Summary and Conclusions" of the paper, "How Indian Students and Parents Evaluate Their Schools" (Series IV, No. 11), the writer briefly described the action taken by a group of White Mountain Apaches in Cibecue, Arizona, to demand control of the school which served them and, specifically, the power to hire and fire administrators and teachers. We have also referred to the desires of the Quinault in Taholah and the Makah in Neah Bay that they control the schools attended by their children. We have found concern among the Blackfeet in Browning that the school be open and available to them for adult education and other programs. In these and other communities, groups of concerned Indians are trying to gain more control over the education of their children.

On the other side of the coin, some Indians are reluctant to take control of their schools. At the Whiteriver Education Conference of Apache citizens and parents in 1968, an Apache advisory school board member explained why he and other local Apaches had informed the BIA that they were not interested in taking over the control and administration of the school:

The feelings of the people were that if the contracting (of the school to an Apache corporation or board of education) took place, politics would enter the picture and politicians would take over the various positions. In addition it was felt that although many of our people have been to college, they were not qualified to assume teaching and administrative positions. In short, we were not ready to take over the school.\*

Fear of the schools becoming a political issue, concern over their relative lack of sophistication in the field of formal education, fear of termination of Federal Government support, the possibility that Indians might be taxed to support the school, and everyday apathy may deter other Indian communities from taking over control of their schools.

In most cases, of course, Indians do not have such an opportunity to choose whether or not to control their schools. Bureau of Indian Affairs schools are controlled through the BIA bureaucracy, and many of the personnel in this system--especially those at the Area and Agency level--have been opposed to the new policy of Indians taking control of BIA schools where they are able and willing. In a large number of public schools, such as most of

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\*This is taken from a transcript of the "Whiteriver Education Conference" recorded and translated from Apache by the National Study of American Indian Education.

those on or near the Navajo reservation, the school boards are predominantly non-Indian. To take control of schools in both types of situations, Indian people must become more organized as a political force in order to exert more pressure on the BIA or a local school board or to elect more Indian board members. Of course the problems will not end there, for many Indian communities are rife with factionalism and antagonisms, just as non-Indian communities are.

### Inter-School Comparisons

Studying the parent and teacher scale results school by school reveals very little, and some of the results actually seem contradictory. For example, parents of children in Keshena and Neopit Elementary Schools (Menominee County, Wisconsin) and School C (Minneapolis, Minnesota) were among the least knowledgeable concerning the school, (Scale I-A) but they were also rated as very involved in the school (Scale IV-A)\*. Shonto parents, who appeared to know very little about their school, are very unacculturated relative to our total sample, but Cibecue parents, who also are relatively unacculturated, seem well informed about their school. Other well-informed groups of parents include those in Hoopa, Neah Bay, Pembroke, and Taholah; other poorly informed parents are those in Eagle Butte, Ponca City, Tuba City, and those parents in Minneapolis with students in School C.

On Scale IV-A ("Contact with and Involvement in the School"), those groups of parents rated relatively high on the scale are the ones in Angoon, Hoopa, Keshena, Neah Bay, Neopit, Red Wing, School C (in Minneapolis) and Taholah. Those rated relatively low include parents in Chicago, Cut Bank, Eagle Butte, Magnolia, Pima Central, and Shonto.

On Teacher Scale A, teachers with relatively high ratings and, presumably, the best knowledge of the local Indian community were those in Angoon, Bethel, Browning, Magnolia, Neah Bay and Taholah. These teachers who appear to know very little about local Indians were those who taught in Chicago, Cut Bank, Greeley (Minneapolis), Hoopa, Laguna-Acoma and Webster (St. Paul). (These results do not include teachers in boarding schools). Not surprisingly, it appears that teachers in schools with mixed non-Indian and Indian populations, especially those in large towns and cities, are less likely to know the local Indian community. This is clear from the following table.

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\*This may well be due to unreliability in comparing ratings between centers. We were not able to "adjust" the ratings done by the Minnesota Center of the Menominee County, Minneapolis-St. Paul and Red Wing communities because we received none of the "reliability ratings" with which to establish their reliability vis-a-vis other field centers. (See Papers Nos. 7 and 9, Series IV.)

Table 4. Teachers' Familiarity with the Indian Community and the Concentration of Indians in the Larger Community

<u>Teachers Familiar With Indian Community</u>	<u>Teachers Unfamiliar With Indian Community</u>	<u>Percentage of Indian Students in Schools*</u>
Angoon		100
Bethel		90
Browning		85
Magnolia		100
Neah Bay		66
Taholah		100
	Chicago	3
	Cut Bank	7
	Greeley and Webster (Minneapolis-St. Paul)	10
	Hoopa	45
	Laguna-Acoma	30
	Red Wing	3

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\*This is a rough measure of the percentage of Indian people in the entire community.

It is useful to look at the schools in which parents and teachers were rated highest and lowest on their knowledge of and interaction with each other; this should give us some measure of the degree of communication between the schools and the communities they serve. We present below the six schools with the highest ratings and the six with the lowest on each scale. The differences between these we can say with some confidence are significant.

Table 5. High and Low Extremes of Knowledge and Involvement between the School and the Community

<u>Most Knowledgeable</u>		<u>Least Knowledgeable</u>		<u>Most Involved</u>	<u>Least Involved</u>
<u>Parents</u>	<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Parents</u>
Angoon	Angoon Bethel Browning		Chicago	Angoon	Chicago
Cibecue			Cut Bank		Cut Bank Eagle Butte
			Greeley & Webster (Minneapolis- St. Paul)		
Hoopla		Keshena	Hoopla	Hoopla Keshena	
			Laguna- Acoma		Magnolia
	Magnolia				
Neah Bay	Neah Bay			Neah Bay	
		Neopit			
Pembroke					Pima Central
		Ponca City			
			Red Wing	Red Wing	
		School C Shonto			Shonto
Taholah	Taholah			Taholah	
		Tuba City			

Based on this table, it appears that the communities with the best communication between teachers and parents are Angoon, Neah Bay, and Taholah. Those with the poorest communication include Chicago, Cut Bank, and Shonto. It does not appear that having a relatively high level of parental involvement in school affairs necessarily guarantees that teachers will be very knowledgeable about the Indian community (e.g. Hoopa, Red Wing).

We had hypothesized that there would be a correlation between the degree of communication between Indian parents and the school and the way in which Indian parents evaluated their schools. (See Paper No. 11 in this series of reports.) Specifically, we thought that, in communities in which parents knew teachers quite well, were involved in the school, and where teachers interacted with and knew members of the Indian community, parents would evaluate the schools positively, and vice versa. This did not prove the case; there appears to be no correlation, either positive or negative, between these two general measures.

Nor do we find a correlation between this measure of the degree of communication between the community and the school and the teacher attitudes toward the community as measured by the mean scores for different schools on the "attitudes" section of the Teacher Questionnaire. Evidently, poorly informed teachers are about as likely to hold positive--or negative--attitudes toward Indians as are relatively well-informed teachers. There must be a number of other factors in the background of the teachers, or influences within or from outside of the school, which affect the attitudes of teachers toward Indian people, and we did not measure these with the instruments we used.

### Community Leaders

We obtained some information on the opinions and attitudes of approximately 150 community leaders concerning the involvement of Indian people in the school systems.

#### Scale I: Respondent's Perception of the Local Community's Influence on the School Program.

Community leaders generally agreed that the local Indian community had little influence on the programs and policies of the school. Thirty-one percent of our sample were rated at point 3, 28 percent at point 2, and 9 percent at point 1. Point 3 was defined as follows:

Respondent feels that the local Indian community has some small say in the operation of the school. For example, if they elect a school board or an education committee, these agencies do not function very well, or they do not represent the Indian community well.

Those rated at points 1 and 2 felt that the local community had even less voice than this.

Less than one third of the community leaders interviewed believed that the local Indian community had some meaningful voice in the operation of the school. It was in only a few towns or cities--roughly one fourth of the areas for which we had interviews with four or more community leaders--that a majority of our respondents agreed that such meaningful involvement existed.



For the total sample of 141 respondents, 22 percent were rated at point 4, 9 percent at point 5, and 1 percent at point 6. Included in the definition of point 4 is the statement: "For example, the Indian community may elect a school board or an advisory council which is fairly representative of the community's wishes." This third of our sample evidently perceived the relation of the community to the school to be approximately the same as that in the ideal typical American community.

**Scale J: Respondent's Attitude toward Local Indian Community Influence  
or Control for the School.**

Almost all respondents felt that both the local community and the professional school staff should be involved in planning the school's programs and policies. Only 12 percent were rated at the extremes on the scale--10 percent saying that "all major policy, program, curriculum, and personnel decisions should be made by the local Indian community through its representatives," and 2 percent stating that the school should be controlled entirely by the administration and teachers. Thirty-four percent of the respondents were rated at point 3; they advocated an "equal sharing" of control between community representatives and the professional staff. Equal numbers of respondents (27 percent of the total sample) felt that the school's staff or the community should have the major voice, but that both should be involved.

From all this we gather that most community leaders think that schools for Indians should be set up along the lines of the ideal American model of a school system: a school board working with the administration and teachers to make general policy, personnel, and budget decisions, with the administration and teachers implementing these general policies through the processes of education which they direct.

We were interested in examining the differences in perceptions and attitudes between Indian and non-Indian community leaders, and so we split our sample into Indians and non-Indians and compared the results on scales I and J. There was no difference in the distribution of ratings on scale I. The perception of the degree of Indian control of education in various communities is clearly not affected by this factor. However, there was a difference in the distribution of ratings on scale J, and this difference was significant at the .05 level. Indian leaders ( $N = 70$ ) favored somewhat greater local Indian control of the schools than our sample of non-Indian leaders ( $N = 43$ ).

### Summary and Conclusions

Only one out of four Indian students we interviewed appeared to be very interested in school. The other 75 percent evinced mild interest to general disinterest. Parents appeared to be more concerned about their children getting an education, but it is impossible for us to say how much more. Evidently, Indian parents do not put a lot of pressure on their children to get the education they want them to get. Moreover, it is unlikely that the immediate environment of many Indian children and their socialization

in relatively poor Indian homes and communities are conducive to success in school.

Teachers varied widely in their attitudes toward Indians, but many seemed to feel that Indian students were not well motivated to succeed in their academic work. This they said even though most felt that Indian parents did want their children to do well in school. A number of teachers evidently felt that the school's teachings and the things that the child learned in the home conflicted to some extent.

On the whole, we did not find a great number of teachers holding the negative stereotypes of Indians which they have often been accused of holding. Very few teachers (less than 5 percent) felt negatively about teaching Indian children.

As far as interaction between the Indian community and the school is concerned, it is not very great. Few parents are involved in their school other than visiting them on occasion for athletic or social events or to see teachers. The general opinion of most community leaders that the Indian communities had little meaningful voice in the school is a reflection of this. Few teachers are involved in the affairs of the community either. A majority of teachers live in compounds separated from the remainder of the community. Even among those who are not so separated, most interact with teachers and other non-Indians of their own social class and cultural background when not in the classroom.

As a result, parents and teachers are poorly informed about each other and about each other's institutions. This, of course, makes it more difficult for the schools to serve the Indian community and for Indians to influence the school. All of this is quite understandable, in view of the backgrounds of the people involved, but it is nonetheless lamentable.

The most current suggestion for remedying these ills is to restructure the educational system so that Indians will control the schools their children attend--at least where the population is almost entirely Indian. Most of our community leaders favored an increase in local community control to conform with the ideal American model. It appears that different Indian communities may react either positively or negatively to such suggestions. A large number of Indian people are clearly apathetic about such ideas--they are concerned with more immediate problems. However, we expect to see more and more schools controlled by Indians--through electing Indian board members for public schools and through contracting with the Bureau for BIA schools. We do not expect this to be a panacea for the problems of Indian education, but we do feel that this is both just and necessary.